

Creamy Broccoli Cheddar Soup

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- **4 tablespoons butter**
- **1 shallot, chopped finely**
- **1/2 teaspoon kosher or sea salt**
- **Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1/4 cup flour**
- **2 cups whole milk or half-and-half**
- **2 cups chicken stock**
- **3 cups chopped broccoli florets**
(make sure to include the stems, they are full of flavor!)
- **1 large carrot, julienned or finely chopped** (optional)
- **1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard**
(optional)
- **Pinch of nutmeg**
- **8 ounces freshly shredded cheddar cheese** (about 2 heaping cups, do not use pre-shredded cheese, it will lump)

Instructions:

1. Sauté the Aromatics:

- In a large pot or Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium heat.
- Add the chopped shallot and cook until soft and translucent, about **3-4 minutes**.
- Season with **salt and freshly ground black pepper** to taste.
- Stir in the minced garlic and cook for another **30 seconds**, until fragrant.

2. Make the Roux:

- Sprinkle the flour over the onion mixture and stir constantly for **1-2 minutes**, until the flour is lightly golden.
- Slowly whisk in the milk (or half-and-half) and chicken stock, making sure to break up any lumps.
- Add a pinch of nutmeg

3. Simmer the Vegetables:

- Add the **broccoli florets** and **carrot** (if using) to the pot.
- Bring the mixture to a **gentle simmer**, stirring occasionally, and cook for **12-15 minutes**, or until the vegetables are tender. Do not boil, the soup will separate.

4. Blend for a Smoother Texture (Optional):

- For a chunkier soup, leave it as is.
- For a smoother texture, use an **immersion blender** to puree part of the soup, or carefully blend half of it in a **stand blender**, then return it to the pot.

5. Add the Cheese & Final Touches:

- Stir in the **Dijon mustard** (if using) for a subtle tangy flavor.
- Reduce the heat to low and gradually add the **shredded cheddar cheese**, whisking until fully melted and smooth.
- Taste and adjust seasoning with more **salt and pepper** if needed.

6. Serve & Enjoy!

- Ladle into bowls and serve warm. Pair with crusty bread for the ultimate comfort meal!
